

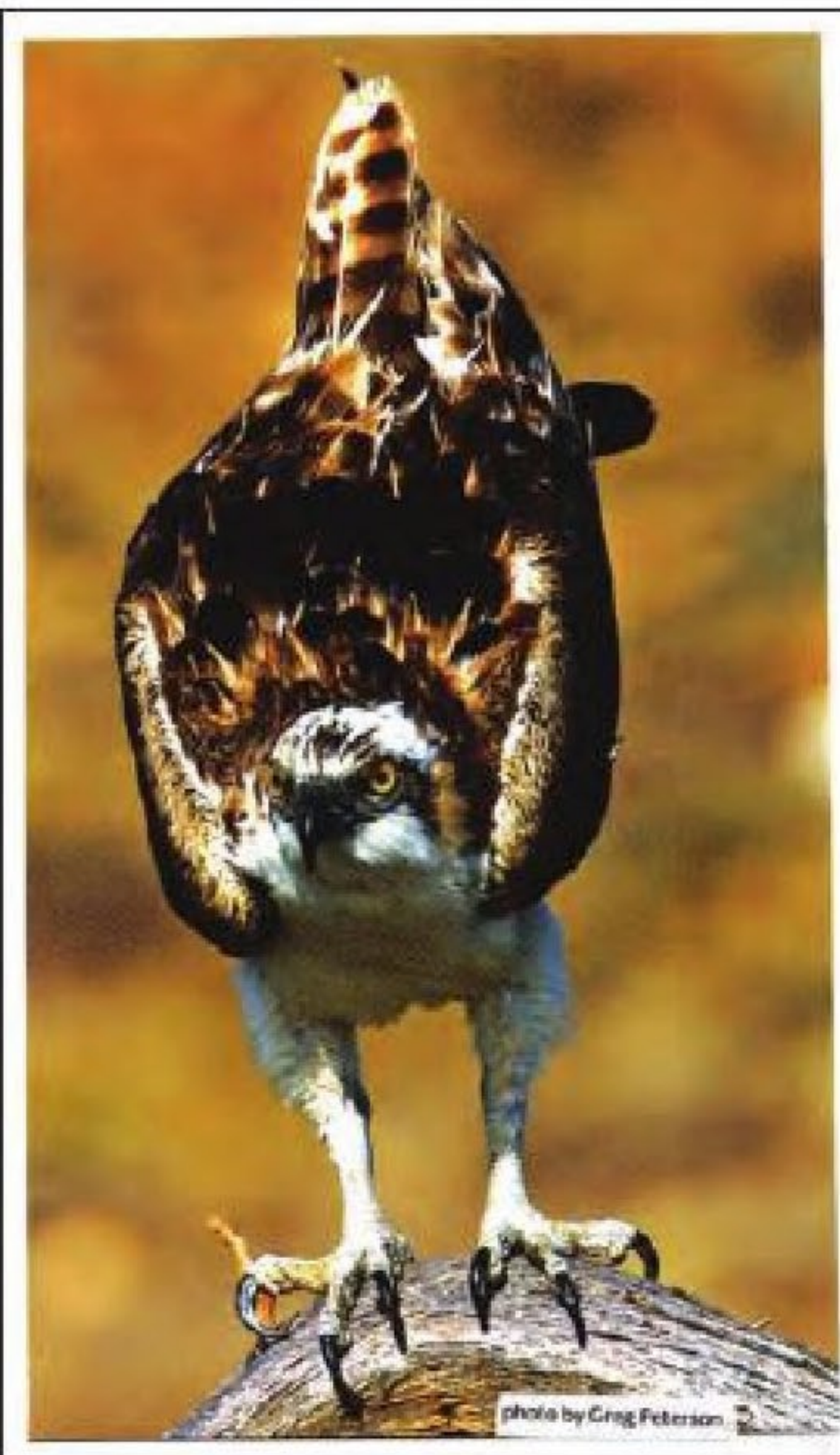
Beware of Senor Gabilan Piscador

By Isaac Chin

The old saying: "One is never too old to learn" is true today as it was a decade ago. For instance, at the ripe age of 96, I am still learning. One of my most traumatic learning experiences occurred this Christmas. I cannot help but share it with you.

It has to do with a beautiful bird which has received honors by being on AIG's 2014 calendar - January page. Its common name on Aruba is Gabilan Piscador, but most commonly, Osprey or sometimes chicken hawk. Admire this bird but BEWARE! Its beautiful colors are deceptive. Under its feathers lies a heart that is vicious and fearless. Its long, curved, sharply-pointed talons could sink into the thickest skin. Its sharp, curved beak could make mincemeat of any meat. It is a shrewd tactician: attacking only from behind when its target is moving away. Though undisturbed, it would mercilessly attack any moving creature irrespectively of size, human beings included.

A few months ago, a friend told me he was barely



able to escape while in his yard in San Barbola. I enjoyed the report, not knowing that mine would soon come. It came the day before Christmas. My daughter was outdoor watering plants, when, out of nowhere, a bird

swooped down on her head, repeatedly, forcing her to flee, screaming and flaring away with her hands. (It was fun seeing her in such a frenzy.) The following day, while watering my plants, enjoying the 5:00 p.m. weather, and humming the song: "What a wonderful world," the bird - which was sitting on an overhead electrical cable nearby - swooped down and landed on my head. I was able to knock it down with my hands. It fell on the ground, stunned. I tried to whack it with one of my shoes, but it took off, seemingly unhurt. But it left me with a bleeding scar under my right eye, and perhaps a blood pressure of over 160.

The following day - Christmas Day - my daughter and I saw the bird in the patio harassing our two cats.

My daughter was able to take a few photo shots. Then I was attacked. I was armed with a fly swatter. I made contact. The bird fell on the floor, stunned. I tried to swat it again, but it took off.

My daughter swore that she'd killed the son of a ... She ridiculed me for trying to kill it with a fly swatter. The following day she came and armed herself with one of my frying pans. I suggested that I should carry the pan because I would be better able to contact the bird before it touched down. "No! No!" she said, bearing in her mind that in my frail condition I would surely miss the bird, but not her head.

We went outside. The bird was on an electric cable, evidently waiting for us, this time in company with another of his kind. Evidently, he had brought reinforcement. When about 5 meters away it swooped down on my daughter who tried to fend it off with the pan, but did not make contact. The bird kept attacking. My daughter took refuge in the porch, the bird following, determined to make mincemeat

of her head. Then, she made contact. The bird fell on the floor, stunned. My daughter's killer instinct flared. Several blows with the pan and the final one with an iron tool nearby brought an end to Mr. Gabilan. He now lies in the pan on a wall in the sun. I have not seen his mate since.

I address him as a male, because on Aruba it is said that only the male Gabilan attacks.

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